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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1785
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3777
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1871
RUEHBA/AMCONSUL PERTH 0737
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000823

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [SOCI](#) [PINS](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: SECT LEADER SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS FOR BLASPHEMY

REF: A. JAKARTA 789

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 161 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: A Jakarta district court convicted Ahmad Mushaddeq, leader of an outlawed religious sect, of blasphemy on April 23 and sentenced him to four years in prison. He was jailed last October for declaring himself "a new Islamic Prophet." Human rights advocates criticized the decision. This negative ruling for religious freedom was announced as the GOI continues to review whether to ban the large Ahmadiyah Muslim group. END SUMMARY.

SECT LEADER IS SENTENCED

[1](#)2. (U) A Jakarta district court convicted Ahmad Mushaddeq--leader of the outlawed Islamic sect Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyah--of blasphemy on April 23. As is the custom in Indonesia, he was immediately given his sentence which was four years in prison. The blasphemy charge was made--and apparently stuck--because Mushaddeq had basically declared himself "a new Islamic Prophet." In handing down the sentence, the judge noted that Mushaddeq seemed "unrepentant."

[1](#)3. (U) According to press reports, the ruling was handed down in a crowded courtroom with nearly 2,000 people in and around the venue, many of whom had been waiting all day. Dozens of members of the hardline Islamic groups Islam Defenders Front (FPI) and Islam Defenders Brigade (LPI) began chanting "Allah Akbar!" ("God is great") after the sentence was handed down and reportedly clashed with Mushaddeq's followers outside. Mushaddeq's lawyer said he would appeal the verdict as unconstitutional.

[1](#)4. (U) Background: The Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI), the country's highest authority on Islam, issued a fatwa last year declaring that the sect was "misguided," saying it had defied one of Islam's six pillars of faith by disputing that the Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet. Subsequently, the sect was outlawed by the Attorney General's Office after the Coordinating Agency for the Supervision of Religious Faiths

and Sects recommended a government ban.

¶5. (U) The sect's teachings also allegedly deviated from mainstream Islamic beliefs by not requiring its followers to pray five times a day, fast during the month of Ramadan nor perform the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca. Hardline Sunni Muslims threatened to attack and persecute members of the sect unless the GOI made arrests. In October 2007, Ahmad Mushaddeq surrendered to authorities along with many of his followers after several attacks on Al-Qiyadah facilities occurred throughout the country. Mushaddeq formed the sect in 2000 and it once claimed 40,000 followers, though those numbers appear to have severely diminished in the past couple of years.

CRITICISM FROM HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES

6 (C) The ruling has been met with criticism. Uli Parulian Sihombing, a leading human rights lawyer and Executive Director of the Indonesian Legal Resource Center, said the district court's ruling was "incorrect" and based on a very loose interpretation of "blasphemy." He also stated to poloff that "internal matters such as faith should not become an issue" in Indonesia given its Constitutional protections on religious freedom.

¶7. (C) Wahyu Effendy of the Indonesian Anti-Discrimination Movement (Gandi), said the conviction will likely not stop Al-Qiyadah activities. He said the problem was also based in the blasphemy law and that many NGO's had been working to eliminate the law for some time, claiming it severely limited religious freedom. The law prohibits anyone from "deliberately making interpretations of any of the recognized religions in Indonesia or publicly engaging in activities which deviate from those religions; such interpretations and

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activities being contrary to, and deviating from 'the true teachings' of those religions." The law can thus capture many behaviors and activities which really should be given religious freedom protection.

¶8. (C) Ahmad Suaedy, Executive Director of the Wahid Institute, which advocates for pluralism in Indonesia, said he feared the decision was purely "political." He feared for the safety of the sects' followers.

BAD NEWS FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

¶9. (C) The ruling in this case was a negative for religious freedom. There is little to no evidence that the Al-Qiyadah group was problematic in any way. In fact, it seemed to keep almost entirely to itself, though Mushaddeq did give public sermons on occasion. The ruling was announced as the GOI continues to review whether to ban the much larger Ahmadiyah Muslim group. Sunni Muslim hardliners are accusing this group of behaving roughly along the same lines as Al-Qiyadah and it has already been adjudged to be "deviant." The GOI seems to be carefully considering the repercussions of any decision that flat-out bans the group, however.

HUME